

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR OVIP (COSGRAVE, LIAM) US EI

SUBJ: IRISH PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE'S OFFICIAL VISIT

TO U.S. - FURTHER COMMENTS ON TOASTS AND SPEECHES

1. TOASTS, REMARKS, AND REFERENCES BY US OFFICIALS DURING PRIME MINISTER LIAM COSGRAVE'S VISIT COULD VERY APPROPRIATELY CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING POINTS WHICH I KNOW ARE OF INTEREST TO HIM AND TO HIS WIFE:

- IRELAND'S EYES (RE)TURNING TOWARDS EUROPE.

-- THE RESPECT FOR IRELAND IN EUROPE WHICH, AT LAST, CLAIMS HER AS EUROPEAN.

--- THE SIZE OF THE US IN COMPARISON TO IRELAND, BUT THE GREAT LEVERAGE IRELAND HAS IN OUR COUNTRY BY VIRTUE OF OUR BLOOD TIES -- TO WIT, THE 20 MILLION AMERICANS OF IRISH BLOOD.

-- THE ULTIMATE FACT THAT IRELAND AND THE US WOULD BOTH BE BETTER SERVED BY MORE ATTENTION TO OUR SIMILARITIES THAN TO OUR DIFFERENCES.

2. US OFFICIALS COULD ALSO MAKE WELCOME REFERENCES TO ASPECTS OF IRELAND THAT ARE GENERALLY IGNORED OR UNKNOWN IN THE US, BUT ARE EXTREMELY CLOSE TO THE CORE OF IRISH FEELING AT ALL LEVELS. THESE ASPECTS ARE PRINCIPALLY HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND SPIRITUAL IN CHARACTER, AND DID NOT TRAVEL INTACT TO AMERICA.

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I FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE MISSING AN OPPORTUNITY IF CERTAIN

POINTS ABOUT IRELAND WERE NOT ACKNOWLEDGED IN PASSING -- POINTS WHICH ARE CHRONICALLY ABSENT IN THE AMERICAN/IRISH CONTEXT, AND ARE CONTINUALLY STRESSED BY IRELAND'S NEW-FOUND EUROPEAN COUSINS.

3. I SUGGEST THAT SOME OF THE FOLLOWING BAREBONE REFERENCES BE FOLDED CASUALLY INTO REMARKS BY ANY OF THE US HOSTS DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT:

-- THE PASSAGE-GRAVE AT NEWGRANGE, THE HILL OF TARA, AND MANY OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WONDERS WHICH REMIND US OF THE ANTIQUITY OF IRELAND, AND THE SENSITIVITY, BEAUTY, AND ORDERED CONCEPT OF LIFE THAT WERE FOSTERED ON THE ISLAND MANY THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.

-- GLENDALOUGH, CLONMACNOISE, AND OTHER MONASTERIES AND ANCIENT SEATS OF LEARNING WHICH, BEGINNING IN THE 6TH CENTURY, SENT OUT MISSIONARIES, AND ATTRACTED THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS FROM ALL OVER THE WESTERN WORLD FOR STUDY AND THE PRESERVATION OF KNOWLEDGE DURING EUROPE'S TURBULENT DARK AGES.

-- THE GREAT AMALGAM OF NORMANS WITH THE IRISH IN THE 13TH CENTURY WHICH RESULTED IN A POSITIVE EUROPEAN INFLUENCE
-- AND, INCIDENTALLY, THE BEGINNING OF ANY NAME THAT BEGINS WITH "FITZ" (I.E., "FILS" RATHER THAN O' OR MAC).

-- THE GREAT FAMINES OF THE MIDDLE 1840' WHICH DROVE SO MANY DESPERATE IRISH MEN AND WOMEN TO AMERICAN SHORES WITH THE CELTIC, IRISH/NORMAL TRADITIONS OF INDIVIDUALITY AND PRIDE.

-- THE MIX THAT OCCURRED IN IRELAND OVER THE PAST 1000 YEARS WHICH INCLUDED DANES, SCOTS, FRENCH, SPANISH, AND ENGLISH. A TRUE IRISHMAN, WITH A SENSE OF HIS OWN HISTORY, REALIZES HE IS NOT AS ETHNICALLY PRISTINE AS IS GENERALLY CLAIMED.

-- THE ENDURING FACT OF THE IRISH TONGUE, A RICH, MULTIFACETED LANGUAGE CONTAINING THE ANCIENT CELTIC APPRECIATION OF SUBTLETIES AND FATE, WHICH HAS INFLUENCED SO MANY IRISH
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AND ANGLO-IRISH WRITERS, PLAYWRIGHTS, AND POETS IN ENGLISH. IRELAND'S ANCIENT LITERATURE AND POETRY, IN THE IRISH LANGUAGE, ARE WIDE-RANGING, COMPLEX AND SOPHISTICATED. THE EPIC POEM TAIN BO CAELANGE IS THE LONGEST EPIC POEM OF ANY EUROPEAN LANGUAGE.

-- OF MORE MODERN GENRE, THE IRISH ARE JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF THEIR ROLE IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND

UNITED NATIONS. THE LATE EAMON DE VALERA WAS
PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE, AND IRELAND HAS SUPPLIED
UNITS FROM ITS SMALL ARMY TO MOST OF THE UN PEACE-
KEEPING OPERATIONS.

4. AMERICA HAS A STEREOTYPED VIEW OF AN IRISH POLITICIAN/
STATESMAN. PROMINENT IRISH VISITORS ARE COURTEOUS AND WISE
ENOUGH NOT TO TRY TO DISPEL THIS VIEW TOO QUICKLY IN THE US.
THEY WILL GO ALONG WITH IT, AND APPEAR TO ENJOY IT. BUT THE
VIEW HAS NOT BEEN ACCURATE FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS. THE
SOPHISTICATED OR JUST PLAIN MODERN IRISH PERSON IS A BIT BORED
WITH THE IRISH-AMERICAN VERSION OF WHAT HE OR SHE IS.

5. PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. COSGRAVE ARE NOT, IN ANY SENSE,
ARCH OR CRITICAL. THEY UNDERSTAND ETHNICITY, AND WILL ENJOY
THE SUPER-IRISHISMS THEY ENCOUNTER IN THE US. I KNOW,
HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT AN
APPRECIATION OF OTHER ASPECTS OF IRELAND THAT ARE NOT
DISTORTED BY ANACHRONISTIC SENTIMENTALITY AND CONSPIRATORIAL
CAMARADERIE.

6. AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT: THE COINCIDENCE OF PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE'S
FATHER AND MINISTER FITZGERALD'S FATHER COULD BE APPROPRIATELY
-- AND AMUSINGLY -- REFERRED TO:

-- LIAM COSGRAVE IS THE SON OF WILLIAM COSGRAVE WHO
HEADED THE FIRST IRISH FREE STATE GOVERNMENT, AND

-- GARRET FITZGERALD, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
IS THE SON OF DESMOND FITZGERALD WHO HELD THE SAME
POST UNDER WILLIAM COSGRAVE. CURLEY

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